

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 EB-04 DODE-00 CIAE-00 NSC-05
NSCE-00 ACDA-10 USIA-01 INR-05 PM-03 PRS-01 SP-02
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FM AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0944

C O N F I D E N T I A L HELSINKI 0226

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, FI, SU, ESTC

SUBJECT: REQUEST TO FINNISH GOVERNMENT FOR INFORMATION ON
ELECTRONICS ESPIONAGE CASE

REF: HELSINKI 0013

1. HELSINKI NEWSPAPER UUSI SUOMI REPORTED JAN 25 THAT UNIDENTIFIED FINNISH ENGINEER UNDERGOING SECRET TRIAL IN HELSINKI COURT OF APPEALS ON CHARGE RELATING TO TREASON. THE INDICTMENT APPARENTLY IS BASED ON SUSPICION OF DIVERSION OF ELECTRONICS GOODS FROM A WESTERN COUNTRY TO AN UNIDENTIFIED THIRD COUNTRY THROUGH THE COMMERCIAL REPRESENTATION IN HELSINKI OF THE THIRD COUNTRY. ACCORDING TO PRESS, THE DEFENDENT CLAIMS THAT QTE COMMERCIAL ESPIONAGE IS NOT PUNISHABLE UNDER FINNISH LAW. UNQTE. PRESS ACCOUNT LEAVES UNCLEAR BOTH PRECISE CHARACTER OF HIS ACTIVITY AND OF GOVERNMENT'S CHARGE THAT SUCH VIOLATES FINNISH LAW.

2. ON JAN 28, ECONOMIC COUNSELOR TELEPHONED DICK MUELLER, A MIDDLE-LEVEL ECONOMICS OFFICER IN THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, WHO IS OUR MOST FREQUENT POINT OF CONTACT ON ECONOMIC MATTERS, AND NOTED THAT WE HAD BEEN TOLD BY CONFIDENTIAL

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TWO FINNISH BUSINESSMEN IN ELECTRONICS FIELD THAT IT GENERALLY ASSUMED US GOODS INVOLVED. WE REQUESTED THAT THE FINNISH GOVT MAKE INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO THE EMBASSY ON THE CASE IN VIEW OF THE APPARENT INVOLVEMENT OF USG ECONOMIC DEFENSE CONCERNS. WE STATED WILLINGNESS TO TREAT INFORMATION WITH CONFIDENTIALITY COMMENSURATE WITH OBVIOUS SENSITIVITY FROM THE FINNISH GOVERNMENT'S VIEWPOINT. ON JAN 31 MUELLER CALLED

BACK, EXPRESSED INFORMALLY UNDERSTANDING OF MFA ECONOMICS OFFICIALS FOR OUR CONCERN, AND SAID MFA WOULD PROBABLY DECIDE ON FEB 3 HOW IT WOULD PROCEED WITHIN THE FINNISH GOVT.

3. THIRD COUNTRY INVOLVED PROBABLY IS USSR, MAKING THE MATTER ONE OF EXTREME SENSITIVITY FOR FINNISH GOVT AND, WE ASSUME, ACCOUNTING IN LARGE PART FOR SECRECY OF PROCEEDINGS. ON OTHER HAND, FACT THAT TRIAL BEING HELD DESPITE SENSITIVITY SUPPORTS OUR IMPRESSION THAT GOVT VERY INTERESTED IN PREVENTING FINLAND FROM OBTAINING THE REPUTATION OF BEING A CONDUIT FOR DIVERSION OF CONTROLLED GOODS FROM WESTERN TO COMMUNIST COUNTRIES. WE INTEND OUR INQUIRY TO UNDERLINE USG POLICY INTEREST, BUT CONSIDER IT ESSENTIAL THAT WE PROCEED IN OUR APPROACH WITH DISCRETION COMMENSURATE TO THE SENSITIVITY OF THIS MATTER FROM THE FINNISH VIEWPOINT.

4. IF THERE ARE ANY UNDERSTANDINGS BETWEEN USG AND GOF THAT BEAR ON REQUEST FOR INFORMATION THAT WE HAVE PENDING, WE WOULD APPRECIATE BEING INFORMED BY FEB 4.
HOUSTON

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NNN

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